

part of the strengthening of the defences of the Netherbow Port. Then on the eve of the Reformation James Mossman and Mariota Arres, whose initials still adorn the west front, saw to the renovation of the building that survives to this day. Archaeological and documentary evidence complement each other, and while on the one hand Dr Smith can offer a fascinating story of the activities and sympathies of the Marian Sir James Mossman, Royal Assay (as he became), he concludes that the association of the house with John Knox as Minister of St Giles' is quite unlikely; it may just be possible that Knox died in the house, but taken alongside the fascinating history of what can be said with certainty about it, the Reformer's association is almost a distraction.

This however leads into the second part of the book, where from the late eighteenth century and significantly in the nineteenth the assertions became heated that John Knox had indeed been part of this notable house's history. The subject opens up an interesting angle on the perceptions, and divisions, of that later day; as significantly, the passions aroused ensured that a building falling into decay was saved from disappearing altogether.

An attractive feature of Dr Smith's book are the many illustrations, both historic and modern, of the John Knox House. There is also a neat drawing together of the chronological material and a room by room tour of what to look for as one walks through the house. Here we are brought finally up to date, but most appropriately for a house which, in a rather nice turn of phrase by Dr Smith, may aptly be described to be a "place of learning".

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Celtic Dimensions of the British Civil Wars: Proceedings of the Second Conference of the Research Centre in Scottish History, University of Strathclyde. Ed. John R. Young. Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1997. Pp. viii + 232. £20. ISBN 0 85976 452 4.

It is now over twenty years since Professor J.G.A. Pocock made his celebrated plea for a comprehensive British history, a story of the

interactions of the various communities who have inhabited our Atlantic archipelago. English historians stood squarely in Pocock's sights; but their Scottish and Irish peers were hardly entitled to any complacency, being equally focused on domestic concerns to the exclusion of the wider history of "these islands". In no area has Pocock's call to arms had more impact than in the historiography of the manifold troubles which beset the realms of Charles I in the late 1630s and 1640s. Anglocentricity was traditionally couched in the idiom of whig constitutional evolution. Now, not only is the English civil war reinterpreted as the war of the three kingdoms, but a renewed emphasis upon the predominantly confessional expression of ethnic difference within the Stuart composite state has replaced notions of constitutional revolution with those of religious conflict.

The collection under review displays the wares of a new generation of scholars, mainly postgraduates and younger lecturers, who have the confidence to offer an interpretation of the British wars of religion from the perspective of the "Celtic" peripheries. Indeed, the only "English" voice is that of John Morrill, himself a pioneer along with Conrad Russell of the new British history, who moderates the conference proceedings with a perceptive historiographical overview of the "Un-English civil war". While the contributors collectively reflect the new British agenda in this field, they differ on other matters. There is a distinctly whiggish flavour to John Young's essay on the Scottish parliament, which makes a convincing case that during the upheavals of the Covenanting era a "Scottish Commons" emerged within its unicameral confines. During the 1640s the commissioners of the shires had functioned as a separate parliamentary estate, playing an important role alongside the burgh commissioners in staffing parliamentary committees and, at times, determining policy. Young's powerful neo-whig corrective against the prevailing revisionist trend finds little purchase against his colleagues, except in the essay by Sharon Adams who provides a fascinating account of the making of "the radical south-west". Ronnie Lee, for example, rightly questions the radical origins of the Covenanting movement. The seventeenth century was an unrevolutionary age, even in Scotland, and the major turning-points of 1638-41 and 1661-63 both involved conservative reactions to perceived

innovation. A similar revisionist streak runs through John Scally's careful rehabilitation of the 3rd marquis of Hamilton. The figure who emerges from Scally's patient excavation of the Hamilton papers is an astute politician and, within the constraints of courtly deference, a sound adviser. Building on the revisionist analysis of royal counsel begun by Peter Donald in *An Uncounselled King*, Scally pronounces Charles I the uncounsellable ruler of an especially intractable composite state. Indeed, a key element in Hamilton's incisive reading of his monarch's political situation in the late 1630s was a keen awareness of its three-kingdom context. In England, Hamilton warned Charles, there were "so manie malitious spereites" that "no sounner uill your bake be turned, bot they uill be redie to dou as ue have doun heire", while Ireland too "uantes not itt is oune discontents". Though scholars have only recently become enthused by the concept of multiple monarchy, it seems clear that it featured in the mental furniture of seventeenth-century politicians. In the course of an elegant and perceptive essay on Sir George Mackenzie, Clare Jackson notes the – reformist – interest in the different methods of political representation found in the scarcely veiled Lacedemon (England) and Athens (Scotland) of his youthful novel *Aretina* (1660); later, of course, he would celebrate the absolutist utility of a divided Britain with two parliaments "whereof the one might always be exemplary to the other". The sophistication of the royalist Mackenzie is paralleled by a subtle and nuanced study, by John Coffey, of the Covenanting political theorist Samuel Rutherford. Coffey's essay is a *tour de force*, grappling as it does not only with the context and evolution of Rutherford's thought, but also with vexing theological dilemmas. How did Calvinists reconcile the covenant of grace, made between God and the elect, with a National Covenant, made with a mixed body of elect and reprobate? Coffey answers that the latter was a federal, or external, Covenant modelled on that of the Biblical Israelites, in which those Scots without "personal holiness" might nevertheless participate, as "partakers of a federal holiness derived from their godly forefathers".

The Scottish perspective in the volume is complemented by a series of essays on Irish issues. Variouslly, these explore the hesitant politics of the 12th earl of Ormond, puncture the myth of "Celtic" warfare,

track the origins in Irish banditry of the “tories”, and revise the received notion that the arrival of the papal nuncio Cardinal Rinuccini injected a new stream of clericalism into Confederate politics. However, a question mark must still hang over the title of the volume. “Celtic” is a very slippery term. The focus of the Scottish essays in the volume is on the Lowlands, while in seventeenth-century Ireland a tripartite division of ethnic communities prevailed – Old Irish, Old English, New English – which renders our modern ethnic usage somewhat redundant. Moreover, as the late Stuart Piggott has shown, “Celtic” had a very different meaning in the seventeenth century from the one, familiar to us, which it would acquire in the course of the eighteenth.

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Union, Revolution and Religion in 17th-century Scotland. By David Stevenson. Aldershot: Variorum, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1997. Pp. xiv + 334. £52.50. ISBN 0 86078 642 0.

This collection of essays by David Stevenson has been published as part of Ashgate’s *Collected Studies Series*. As such, this collection consists of a plethora of Stevenson’s published articles over the past twenty-five years or so. A series of pioneering works, including *The Scottish Revolution, 1637-44* (1973), *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Scotland 1644-51* (1977), *Alasdair Maccolla and the Highland Problem in the Seventeenth Century* (1980) and *The Government of Scotland under the Covenanters 1637-51* (1982), fundamentally revitalised the field of Scottish Covenanting history. As Professor Stevenson states in the preface to his essays, “my starting point in research was to take a fresh look at the covenanting movement without assuming that religion was the only thing worth studying” (p. ix). Such an approach has since been consolidated by other scholars working in the field of Scottish Covenanting history.

The collection consists of sixteen essays in total, which are broken down into four sections under the headings of Union, Political Thought, Religion and Printing. Five articles are concerned with “Union”, five